

Selections

GET SOMEBODY ELSE.

The Lord had a job for me,
But I had so much to do
I said: "You get somebody else
Or wait till I get through."
I don't know how the Lord came out,
But he seemed to get along;
But I felt a kind o' sneakin' like—
Knowned I'd done God wrong.

One day I needed the Lord,
Needed him right away;
But he never answered me at all,
And I could hear him say
Down in my accusing heart:
"Nigger, I's got too much to do.
You get somebody else
Or wait till I get through."

Now, when the Lord he have a job for me,
I never tries to shirk;
I drops what I have on hand
And does the good Lord's work.
And my affairs can run along
Or wait till I get through.
Nobody else can do the work
That God marked out for you.
—Paul Lawrence Dunbar.

THE GOLDEN PRESCRIPTION.

Justine looked sober all the way up the front walk and all the way up the steps. Usually, when she came home from school sober she grew a little less and less so all the way home till at the front gate she was "Laughing Justine" again. It must be an especially serious "sober" today, the little grandmother who was waiting on the porch decided.

"Well, dear "

Justine's little scowl deepened between her eyes. "'Tisn't 'well,' grandma; I should say not! They've gone and put that new girl at the desk with me."

"Dreadful! Is that new girl a thief or a liar or a—smuggler?"

"Grandma, you're making fun of me. No I don't suppose she smuggles, but I don't want her to snuggle, either!" In spite of herself, Justine smiled at her own little joke. "We can't help 'snuggling' at a little mite o' narrow desk like that, and I'd prefer to snuggle up to somebody I like! I don't like that new girl."

"Poor new girl!" murmured grandmother's kind voice. Grandmother was acquainted with the likes and dislikes of this small person on her doorstep. It was nicer to be liked than disliked by Justine.

"I can't help it; can I, now, grandma? I just don't like her; and if she sits beside me, I'm afraid I'll despise her bye and bye. That's all." As if that were not enough!

For a little minute grandmother only rocked back and forth and looked away, beyond Justine's frowning face, at the everlasting hills. Justine sat down suddenly on the uppermost step and drummed with an impatient little foot. If grandmother were going to preach—

"I believe I know a prescription for liking folks you don't like, dear," was the queer thing grandmother finally said.

"I was thinking about Emily Simmons—how I did dislike that girl! We sat together, too. She wore a dress with huge blue spots, and I hated every spot! I couldn't bear her finger nails because they were long and pointy, and mine wanted to be. I couldn't bear anything about Emily Simmons."

"Why Grandmother Hitchcock, you mean Aunt Em'ly Simmons, at the Old Ladies' Home, I do believe! And I thought you loved!"

"I do love," smiled dear grandmother. "We've been the dearest friends for sixty years, and I'm going to have Aunt Emily over for her birthday tea next week. We've 'birthdayed' together a great many times."

"But, grandma"—

"But, Justine, you see I took that 'prescription' sixty years ago, and it's cured me ever since. I'm glad I thought of it. I could write it out for you to get filled—you fill it yourself, really"—

Grandmother's dear voice waited patiently. Grandmother's gentle gaze rested on the small person on the upper step.

"I suppose it's the Golden Rule, prob'ly," drummed the small person.

"Not just exactly, dearie, though it is a blooded relation, and it is a golden prescription. I could write it out"—

Justine got to her feet, laughing in spite of herself. "I suppose you want a paper 'n' pencil, then," she said.

"Yes," nodded grandmother, happily. "On my little table by the window, dearie."

The prescription for "liking people that you didn't like" did not take very long to write on the slip of paper in the neat, old-fashioned script. Grandmother folded the slip and handed it to Justine. "In case of need," she said, smilingly. "You may not need it at all, but you can keep it by you to use if you do. Don't look at it until you are ready to take the medicine it prescribes."

Justine laughed enjoyingly. Grandmother's little mysteries were fun. With that little folded paper "prescription" in her half of the desk at school it would almost be worth sitting with that new girl. Any minute she could open the paper and see what it was grandmother had "taken" sixty years ago to make her like "Aunt Em'ly" Simmons, and what would make her, Justine Hitchcock, like her new seat mate.

"Dearie! dearie!" cried her grandmother's voice. This was next day as Justine was starting for school. She had gotten as far as the gate.

"Yes, grandmother."

"If you open it, you must 'take' what it prescribes, remember. Don't open it unless you're willing to!"

"No'm."

"Bless her!" Grandmother turned to her sewing again. "She'll make a face at first, perhaps, at the taste, but it will work. It's a good prescription. It cured me!"

Back across sixty years, grandmother saw another eleven-year-old trudging to school to sit beside Emily Simmons. Poor Emily Simmons! Grandmother could see the huge blue polka dots, and the lesser brown ones on Emily's cheeks and nose; she could remember just how it felt to "disspise" Emily Simmons sixty years ago.

"And we came home with our arms around each other, skippety-hop!" laughed little grandmother, tenderly.

That new girl was already in her seat when Justine reached the school room. She was hunched rather dejectedly over her spelling book, whispering the words over and over to herself. That new girl was such a poor speller! Anyway, she had been yesterday—couldn't spell America. Funny kind of American, she was!

Justine edged into her share of the seat in a gingerly, inhospitable sort of way. How she did hate straight red hair with pink ribbons on—pink! How she did "dis-spise" folks that twittered their lessons that way to 'emselves! And folks that couldn't learn to spell, anyhow, twitter or not twitter, and that

sighed long sighs as if maybe they were going to cry, and that wore funny dresses, and that sat in folks' seats that didn't want 'em to!

Grandmother went out on the porch in plenty of time to watch for Justine that afternoon. A queer little anxious look was in grandmother's soft old eyes. Supposing the prescription didn't work at all! Suppose it had lost strength in all these years! But grandmother waited hopefully.

"There are two little girls coming down by Jeffrey Morris' store, but I don't see anything of Justine. Wait! That's Justine!" The taller of the two little girls wore Justine's plaid dress, anyway. Down the street, skippety-hop—grandmother sat up straighter in the chair and smiled a relieved smile. Then the two skippety-hoppers turned down a side street and were lost to her sight.

Justine was alone when, a half hour afterwards, grandmother saw her again. She came hopping and skipping up the street and up the front walk. This was "Laughing Justine."

"Laugh if you want to, grandma; I'm laughing!" she cried. "I'd been here sooner to tell you what makes me do it, but I went home with that new girl first. Her name's Johnita because her father's name is John. Don't you think Johnita's a real nice name? Oh, yes, grandma, I took that prescription you gave me!" Justine sank down on the topmost step in a little fit of reminiscent mirth. "I opened it right there in my desk. I did so dislike that new girl 'side of me! I thought if anything ever could make me over into liking her—grandma, I like her! I do this minute! We're going to play together all Saturday."

Grandmother was sewing again busily. The smile stayed on in her eyes and glimmered sunnily behind the windows of her spectacles.

"But it was the queerest prescription! 'Do something for her once every day'—honest, grandma, I thought it was silly! But I'd looked, so I had to do's it said to. First I couldn't think of a living thing to do for her, and then I thought of spelling. She's an awful speller. When teacher gave us fifteen minutes study-together time, I helped her at fast as I could, heaving her words and—and kind of introducing her to 'em, you know. You can remember how to spell words you've been introduced to a whole lot better. We looked 'em up in my dictionary. Grandma, she never missed a word in class! You don't know how it pleased her and how she thanked me. She's the thankfulest girl! But, pooh! I didn't do hardly a thing" Justine broke into a soft little laugh. "Just took one teeny dose of that gold medicine, grandma, that's all. It tasted queer at first, but now I like it. I'm going to take another dose to-morrow. I'm going to give her a blue hair ribbon, if mother's willing. She wants one dreadfully, because she knows pink discords her hair, and she says it's bad enough anyway, to have her hair. She says the aunt she lives with is color blind, she guesses."

Grandmother's glance had lifted from her lap and wandered now over Justine's fair head to the everlasting hills. It was as if grandmother dispatched by her gentle "wireless" the news of the success of the golden prescription.

"It's queer, though—honest it is, grandma—how doing something for folks makes you like 'em!" Justine ran on happily. Suddenly she sprang to her feet and hugged dear grandmother in a fierce little gust of love. "Nobody'd ever think of such things but you, grandma, because you're golden!"—Annie Hamilton Donnell, in the Congregationalist.